

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Council of the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science

Minutes of Meeting 02-04

held

Friday, April 19, 2002 at 2:00 p.m. in H 769

Present:	N. Esmail (Chair) M.O. Ahmad S.T. Alkass J.W. Atwood R. Bhat T.D. Bui M.Y. Chen T. Fancott R. Ganesan	G.J. Gouw L. Harris J. Jans K. Khorasani L. Landsberger S. Malik O. Moselhi M. Nimchuk C. Paradisis	N. Piccirilli H. Poorooshasb L. Quesnel P. Regimbald M.R. Soleymani G. Vatistas S. de Souza (Recording Secretary)
Observers:	M. Silas	L. Zack	
Regrets:	W.S. Ghaly J.C. Giguère F. Haghighat	R. Jayakumar C. Petrone T. Radhakrishnan	S. Tahar
Guest:	S. Khwaja		

1. Adoption of Agenda

Motion That the agenda be adopted as circulated (R. Bhat, M.O. Ahmad)

02-04-01

Vote: Carried unanimously

2. Adoption of Minutes

Motion That the Minutes of Meeting 02-03 (March 22, 2002) be adopted

02-04-02

(J.W. Atwood, G. Gouw)

The following correction was made:

Page 5, first paragraph, last sentence: '... we recognize that there are certain implementation issues because this is a complex problem that has to be addressed at the University level.

Vote: Carried unanimously

3. Chair's Remarks

New Building

The Chair announced that the ground-breaking ceremony will take place on Monday, May 13, 2002. A notice was distributed to the Council members. Rector Lowy has invited every professor and staff member in the Faculty. The Chair added that this will be a big day in the history of the

Faculty. Although the students will be busy, the Chair hoped that the ECA would be on hand. Invitations will be issued.

Enrolment

The Chair said that the figures on admission applications are available. There are no big increases as in the preceding years. The rate is the same as last year except in the case of Computer Science where there is a 30% drop in applications, excluding the Software Engineering program. The Chair was uncertain whether this phenomenon was temporary or cyclical in nature. However, to keep the reduction of the Faculty budget at a minimum, the Registrar's Office has been asked to balance the drop with the programs that have an increase in admission applications.

4. Graduate Curriculum Changes (ECFC Doc. 02-04-01)

Dr. Vatistas said that there are two changes. He presented Document ECFC Doc. 02-04-01 – Graduate Curriculum Changes, for approval.

Department of Computer Science

COMP 6961 – Graduate Seminar in Computer Science

The change involved the way the course should be graded, namely a pass/fail basis, which was considered to be more appropriate.

Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

MECH 690A – Rheology and Theory of Polymer Dynamics

It was explained that the course is interdisciplinary in nature.

**Motion
02-04-03**

That the changes to COMP 6961 – Graduate Seminar in Computer Science, and the slot course, MECH 690A – Rheology and Theory of Polymer Dynamics, be approved (G. Vatistas, R. Bhat)

A typo in the word, 'approach' in Calendar Update Form – A, COMP 6961, was identified.

Vote: Carried unanimously

3. Chair's Remarks (continued)

Faculty representation in the School of Graduate Studies

The Chair informed the Council that the Executive Committee, in a meeting, had discussed the Faculty's representation in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). A meeting with the GPDs took place. The Faculty's graduate enrolment and graduate programs were examined. The Chair noted that the representation appears unfair to the Faculty. All representations on the SGS are made on the basis of 3 votes for Arts and Science, 1 vote each for the other Faculties (Engineering and Computer Science, John Molson School of Business and Fine Arts), that is, our representation is 1/6 of the total vote, particularly in the Committees. The Chair wished to initiate a debate to explore the Faculty's thoughts on ENCS representation. A document, 'Size of Graduate Students in the Faculty and in the University', was distributed. ENCS has 40% of the graduate student count in Concordia. The Chair remarked that this percentage might be taken into consideration in the Awards Committee. The number of awards given to our students is small relative to the percentage of graduate students in the Faculty.

In other universities, not every professor is automatically a member of the School of Graduate Studies. One has to qualify to be a member of the School of Graduate Studies. If we go by the criterion that a professor must supervise graduate students to be a member of the School of

Graduate Studies, the same objective will be achieved, namely the percentage of engineering graduate students is 40% and not 1/6 as is currently reflected in the Committees.

Another question is our representation on the Council of the School of Graduate Studies. Currently our representation is 25%. In effect, our Faculty which has 40% of the graduate student population in Concordia, has only 25% representation on a curriculum committee that approves or disapproves our Faculty's curricula. It was pointed out that it was time to initiate a discussion in this area.

The SGS should be a facilitator of graduate studies, the guardian of standards of graduate studies and its composition must therefore reflect the activities of its constituents. The best way to do this, as was visualized when the Division of Graduate Studies was established, is through membership which should include those heavily involved in graduate studies and research. The first indication in this direction was when former Dean Kusy asked to produce Ph.D. standards whereby this goal would have been achieved. In fact, the Committee at that time had unanimously recommended in favour of membership. Again, the Awards Committee does not reflect reality as it comprises 3 members from Arts and Science, and 1 from each of the other 3 Faculties. Our success rate in NSERC is high and yet with respect to internal competitions, our success rate does not compare. It was felt that the minimum standards for membership to the SGS should be modified and the Council, which is the central body of graduate studies in the University, should reflect the present reality. In this way, we will be able to drive home the focus of research at Concordia, which will improve our graduate student activities and our future. The need for review of representation should apply to all the Committees as well as the Council to make it compatible with better-known Canadian universities where the School of Graduate Studies requires membership. Therefore those who are very active in graduate research will have more say in the Committees and in the Council. Also, there should be a better balance of membership among Faculties (presently, we have 40% of graduate students which should be reflected but we have only one member on the Committee).

One member questioned the need for a University-wide Awards Committee. It was felt that it is difficult to compare, for example, an engineering graduate student with a Fine Arts graduate student. To overcome this difficulty, it was suggested that award quotas be assigned to the different Faculties. The final decision on the awards should rest with the Faculty. Another approach suggested is to propose a change to the Calendar rules. The distribution of awards should depend on the percentage of graduate students in each Faculty. As a Faculty, we deserve to get our fair share of awards.

Another member indicated that he had served on the Concordia Graduate Scholarship Committee for 3-4 years. He pointed out that different faculties place different weights on the criteria for awards. Different programs are differently weighted, e.g. the Masters program is weighted differently from the Doctorate program. Where ENCS fails is in the quality of reference letters and supporting documentation provided by faculty members and GPDs for the competition. Also, assisting students in their award applications can be beneficial in winning Concordia awards in proportion to NSERC awards. It was further pointed out that the Faculty's success rate with NSERC places us with lower ranking institutions.

Another member added that there are two separate yet related issues:

Internal Fellowships: At the University level, we have an imbalance in representation and that is why we see that the success rate of our graduate students is not balanced.

It was also indicated that with the case of external agencies such as NSERC, the problem is twofold. (i) The quota given to Concordia is very low. Yet, in terms of the success rate, the proportion is slightly below the average of other universities but ranks Concordia in absolute terms with the lesser institutions. This is because Concordia gets a small number of NSERC fellowships.

This is seen also on the NSERC web page where Concordia ranks with the bottom 20% of universities for awards. (ii) The manner in which Concordia chooses the candidates.

The Chair noted that there are specific problems to particular awards and committees. There are structural problems which are not limited to the decisions on the awards. They are internal to the SGS Council.

The insufficient numbers of Concordia's representation on NSERC Committees was noted. The Chair remarked that following the announcement of the results in a past FCAR competition, a strong representation was made to FCAR and therefore, this year's results have been very positive. There appears to have been a bias against Concordia, the Chair added.

Following the discussion, the Council recommended to the School of Graduate Studies:

**MOTION
02-04-04**

THAT the membership of the Graduate Awards Committee be changed as follows: 3 from Arts and Science, 3 from Engineering and Computer Science, one each from the John Molson School of Business and the Faculty of Fine Arts, in order to reflect the present reality (G. Vastistas, H. Poorooshasb)

Vote: Aye – 17; Nay – 0; Abstention – 1

5. Election of Faculty representatives on the Council of the School of Graduate Studies

Dr. B. Ashtakala (BCE)	2002-2005
Dr. M. Soleymani (ECE)	2002-2005

6. Election of Faculty representative on the Council of the School of Graduate Studies Curriculum Committee

Dr. M. Soleymani (ECE)	2002-2004
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7. Election of Faculty representative on the Graduate Studies Committee

Dr. F. Haghighat (BCE)	2002-2004
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8. Election of Faculty representative on the Senate

Dr. A.M. Hanna (BCE)	2002-2005
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9. Election of Faculty representative on the Senate Standing Committee: Academic Hearing Board

Dr. A.M. Hanna (BCE)	2002-2004
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10. Election of Faculty representative on the Senate Standing Committee: Academic Programs Committee

Dr. B. Ashtakala (BCE)	2002-2005
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11. Election of Faculty representative on the Senate Standing Committee: Research

Dr. F. Haghighat (BCE)	2002-2005
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12. **Election of Faculty representative on the Senate Standing Committee: Undergraduate Scholarships and Awards Sub-Committee**

Dr. W.S. Ghaly (MIE) 2002-2005

13. **Election of Faculty representative on the Visiting Lectures Committee**

Dr. C. Wang (ECE) 2002-2004

Ms. C. Paradis informed the Council that items 5-13 were the results of Faculty-wide elections.

Motion **That the elected representatives under the corresponding Committees (items 5-13), be**
02-04-05 approved (O. Moselhi, G. Vatistas)

The Chair remarked on the large number of representatives from the Department of Building, Civil and Environmental Engineering on the above committees (items 5-13).

Vote: Carried unanimously.

14. **Other Business**

Mr. Nimchuk said that he received a petition, originally sent to Dr. Moselhi for the last BCE Council meeting, concerning elective course CIVI 435 – Foundation Design which is no longer being offered every year. The course, taught each year for the past 24 years, was a paired (undergraduate/graduate) course but was split last year. 46 students who signed the petition want the course to be taught next year. A professor is willing to teach the course. Nothing came out of the presentation given at the last BCE Council meeting and Civil Engineering students asked to bring the petition to the attention of the Council. Other universities are offering the same course as a core course. The students are upset about it – they want the course to be offered next year.

The Chair of the Department explained briefly that the Civil Engineering Program was accredited as the only program in the Faculty for six years with CIVI 435 as an elective course. Further, elective courses in the BCE Department are not required to be offered every year. The Department is trying to cope with the Faculty policy to increase as much as possible the number of students in the classes and also, to avoid teaching loads that may not be fully complete. In an effort to improve the situation, the Department has taken upon itself to stagger the courses. This approach will also apply to Building Engineering courses. The reason it was offered in the past every year is because it was a pair equivalent course. Between graduate and undergraduate students, we had enough students to populate the course. When the course was split, there were no resource implications. Further, this decision will not put the students at risk for accreditation or deny them training. The course is there but will not be offered every year.

Dr. Alkass, Associate Chair who handles teaching workloads in the Department, was invited to give his comments. Dr. Alkass explained that when the course was split, there was a condition that there would be no resource implications. The Faculty Council approved that it be offered alternately, one year for graduate students and one year for undergraduate students. Further, University regulations permit the graduate component, when offered, to be open to interested undergraduate students.

The Department Chair also commented on the process itself. He said that if every petition is to be addressed and every one encouraged to sign as is done with municipal elections, the academic affairs cannot be handled well. He further explained that in the Department, there are four academic working groups invited to give course plans two years ahead of time. The Associate

Chair together with the UGPD and Coop Program Director decide on the undergraduate courses to be offered the following year. The same case applies to the GPD for graduate courses. Further, faculty members in the 4 working groups are asked what they are interested to teach. The remaining courses are assigned to part-time professors. Therefore there is no need to rally students and invite petitions.

The Council Chair inquired if the issue could be revisited. The Department Chair responded that since the notion was to revisit the earlier decision of the Department Council and the Faculty Council, he could work on it. The Council Chair said that as the undergraduate students wished to take the course next year, they should be allowed to. He wished to accommodate the petition. However, he noted that if the 40+ students disappeared and there remained only a token number, the issue was to be brought back to Council.

The Department Chair remarked that with all due respect to the Council members, he did not think that course scheduling was an issue for discussion before Council because it would open a floodgate of unmanageable situations. The Chair agreed that teaching loads is not the privy of the Council.

15.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m. (G. Vatistas)